

WHAT ARE MY LEGAL RIGHTS AS A RELATIVE?

DCFS shall provide notice to certain family members when a child comes into DCFS custody. It is important to remember that relatives' rights are tied to the parents' legal rights to their children.

This becomes an issue when a father has not established paternity to the child. Paternity is the legal acknowledgment of the parental relationship between a man and his child.

A parent who has not established legal rights to his or her child is called a "putative" parent in court. If you are a relative on the father's side, and the father's legal rights have not been established, then there are several ways to establish them:

- prove that the child was born of a marriage,
- the father signs an acknowledgment of paternity, or
- by court order.

CAN I VISIT MY RELATIVE IN FOSTER CARE?

Visits between the child and his or her parents are almost always a part of the case plan. Children who keep good family ties while in foster care do better. This is why families and children will have opportunities for personal visits, talking by phone, and participating in activities like teacher conferences, and other school and community events. Usually visits are supervised by someone from DCFS and should take place in the most home-like setting possible.

Grandparents or other relatives may be allowed to visit with the child during these visits too if the judge determines it is in the best interest of the child. Just tell the child's caseworker that you would like to visit. The more loving and appropriate adults in a child's life, the better it is for the child.